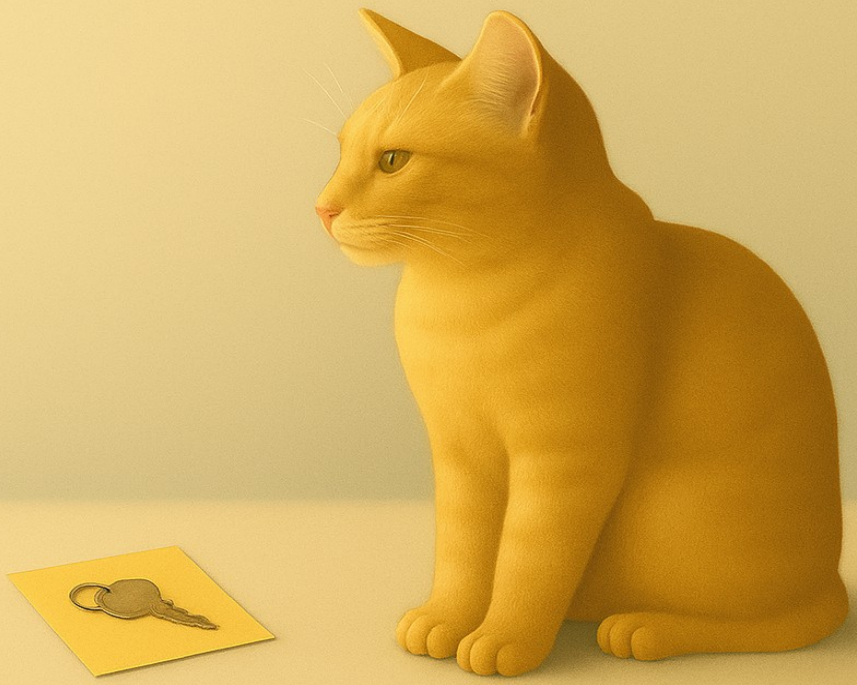
Planning Ahead with Heart

So your cat stays safe when you can't be there



Cat Man

(Booklet's)

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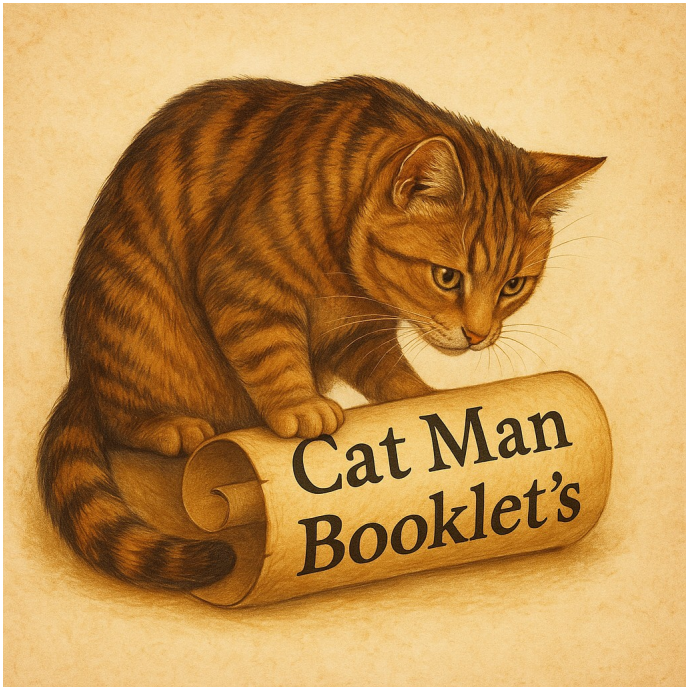

Hrsg: Cat Man (Booklet's)
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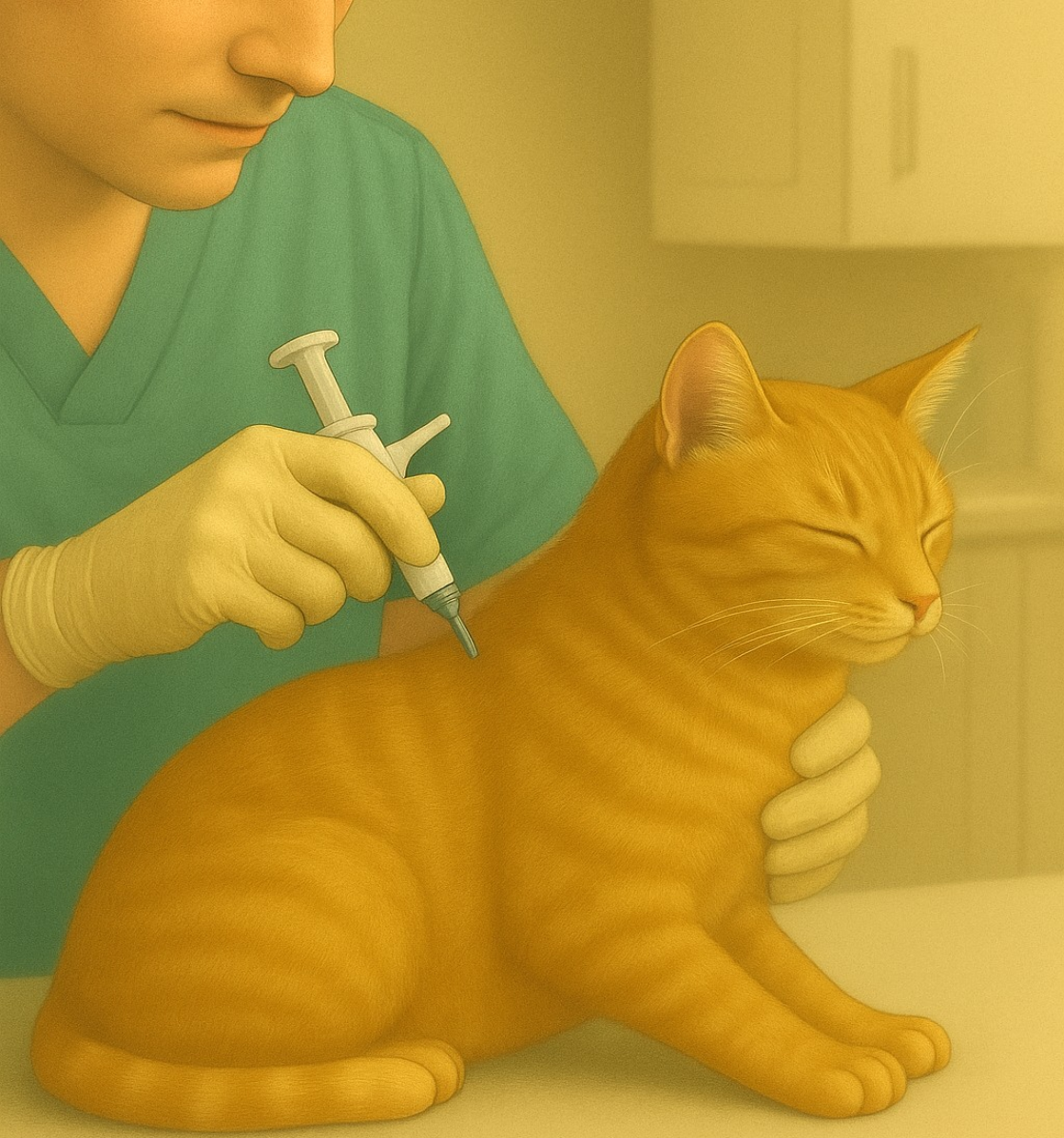
Planning Ahead with Heart

So Your Cat Stays Safe When You Can't Be There

Taking care of a cat also means preparing for the moments when you suddenly can't. Every year in the United States, many cats end up in animal shelters because their guardians are hospitalized unexpectedly or pass away without having made clear arrangements. With a few simple steps, you can ensure your cat never faces that fate. A thoughtful plan gives your cat security—and gives you peace of mind, knowing that your companion will be protected no matter what.

1. Why Planning Ahead Matters

No one likes to think about what might happen if they suddenly become unable to return home. But for cats, this question is critical: they cannot call for help, cannot open the door, and cannot tell anyone that they are alone. If their person doesn't come back, a cat may wait for hours or days without food or care—until a neighbor notices something is wrong or authorities intervene. Many beloved pets end up in shelters simply because no one knew they existed or whom to contact.
A solid emergency plan prevents this. It is an act of love and responsibility—a small but essential safeguard for the animal that depends entirely on you.



Don’t forget to microchip your cat — it can save her life.

2. Immediate Actions – Help in the First Hours

If something happens to you, every hour counts. A simple, clear structure ensures your cat is not left alone and receives care right away.

Choose a trusted person—someone who knows your cat, cares about her, and is willing to step in immediately if needed, even for an extended period. Talk openly about expectations, limits, and practical details so everything is clear before an emergency ever happens.

Give this person a spare key to your home. It is the only way they can act without delay if you become unreachable. Place a visible emergency notice inside your home, ideally on the door or refrigerator. It should read:

"Attention! A cat lives in this home. If I am unable to respond, please contact: [Name, phone number of trusted person]."

Preparation outside the home is equally important. Carry a small **Emergency Pet Alert Card** in your wallet with the note:
"A cat is waiting for me at home. Please notify: [Name, phone number]."
First responders in the U.S. are familiar with such cards, and they ensure your cat won't be forgotten.

For outdoor cats, additional information is needed. Write down their territory, familiar yards, and neighbors who know them.

Make sure the cat's microchip is registered with a U.S. database such as **HomeAgain or Avid.** Only then can she be quickly identified and reunited with your emergency contact.

"In the United States, microchip registration is not centralized or free like in Germany. Most major registries —such as HomeAgain or AVID—require a one-time fee or a membership. Even so, registering your cat is essential, because shelters scan microchips and check these databases first."

„In the United States, microchipping of cats is highly recommended and significantly increases the chance of being reunited if lost. However, current data suggest that only a minority of cats entering shelters are microchipped — highlighting a major opportunity for improvement."

A microchip is only useful if it's registered — without registration, your cat cannot be identified or returned home.

Don’t forget:
Register cat with
HomeAgain and AVID.

3. Organization and Documentation – The Emergency Folder

The emergency folder is the centerpiece of your preparation. It allows your trusted person to immediately find everything needed to care for your cat correctly. Keep it in a clearly visible and accessible place—on the kitchen counter, in a drawer by the phone, or on a shelf you use daily. Update it regularly.

Your folder should include:

– your contact information and that of your trusted person
– the name, address, and phone number of your veterinarian
– details about food, water habits, the litter box, and your cat's favorite places
– any medical conditions, allergies, or medications
– vaccination records and pet insurance documents (if applicable)
– one or two up-to-date photos of your cat

This ensures your cat can be identified quickly and cared for properly, even in a stressful situation. Mark the date of the most recent update on the front of the folder—this helps you keep everything current.

ATTENTION!
A cat lives in this hone.
Please contact:
(Name)
al __ Phone Number)
EMERGENCY FOLDER
All important information
in one place.

4. Legal Protection – If You Don't Return
To ensure your cat is cared for in the long term, you should put the arrangements in writing. In the United States, a **durable power of attorney** allows your chosen person to make decisions for your cat's care if you become unable to act—this works independently of a will. You can specify that your trusted person has full authority to handle all matters related to your cat's wellbeing immediately.

In your **last will and testament**, you should also include a specific "pet clause." This clause states who will take over your cat permanently and what financial support will be provided. Many people choose to leave a set amount of money—such as $3,000 or $5,000—to the designated caregiver, with the instruction that it must be used for the cat's care, including food, veterinary bills, and supplies. This is often done as a **bequest with instructions**, which is legally recognized in the U.S.

If you are unsure how to phrase it, an attorney or estate planner can help. Many animal shelters and rescue organizations also offer guidance and sample wording for pet guardianship planning.

5. Humanity and Responsibility – When You or Others Step In

Clarity helps not only guardians but also the people who assist them. If you are the trusted person, discuss expectations, finances, and veterinary decisions openly beforehand. Consider whether you have enough time, space, and patience to take responsibility if an emergency arises.

If you must enter the home during a crisis, do so calmly. Speak gently, offer food and water, and give the cat time to adjust to new smells and routines. Familiar items—a blanket, a favorite bed, a food bowl, or even a worn T-shirt—can make the transition much easier.

Planning ahead is not a sad subject. It is an expression of love and responsibility—for the ones who depend on us completely.

Planning ahead means trust.

Form 1 – Mini Emergency Card
(This page may be copied or printed for personal use.)

Cat's Name: _____

Address: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Phone Number: _____

Veterinarian: _____

Form 2 – Short Profile

Name: _____

Age: _____

Microchip Number / Tattoo:
_____

Special Notes: _____

Medications: _____

Form 3 – Checklist

[ ] Trusted person informed
[ ] Spare key delivered
[ ] Emergency notice placed visibly
[ ] Emergency folder updated
[ ] Will / durable power of attorney prepared

Conclusion

Responsibility does not end with us—it continues in the lives we protect. With a bit of preparation, you can make sure your cat remains loved, cared for, and safe, even when you cannot be there yourself.

For your notes

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